

COVID-19 Information Bulletin #12

Date issued: April 24, 2020

Purpose of bulletin: To keep local stakeholders informed of the quickly-evolving novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and its implications for Wellington County, Dufferin County and the City of Guelph (WDG).

Due to the evolving nature of the situation, further updates may be forthcoming.
For more information visit www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca

Surveillance

- **Highlights**
 - The downward trend of cases by onset date seen in early to mid-April was followed by a more recent increase in daily new cases by onset date. It is unknown whether changing testing criteria and volume may be affecting these trends.
 - The trend of emergency department visits at area hospitals shows the usual peak in late December and early January associated with seasonal influenza, as well as a second peak in visits for respiratory symptoms in March that coincides with the initial rise in COVID-19 cases in WDG.
 - The overall confirmed case fatality rate (percentage) in Canada is now 4.8, closer to the current worldwide average of 6.9%.
- Information about cases in WDG can be found on [our website](#) and [WDGPH's COVID-19 Status Report](#).
- Information about institutional outbreaks can be found in our [Retirement and Long-Term Care Outbreak Bulletin](#).

Accessing and Donating Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Contact your corresponding WDGPH liaison for information about how to access and donate PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic in WDG.

Here4Help: Tools and techniques to manage the stresses of COVID-19

- **CMHA's [Here4Help](#)** is an online repository to find resources, information, and guidance to help navigate this 'new and temporary' normal. Resources are categorized for different audiences.
- Included on the site is **Here4Healthcare**, a new service that offers mental health check-ins and support for frontline workers. To get started, click "[Refer yourself](#)", fill in the form, and someone from CMHA will get back to you within 24 hours.

Guidance Documents

- **New:** WDGPH [Guidance for facilities providing temporary accommodations to essential workers](#) [April 22, 2020]
- **New:** WDGPH Guidance for building managers and residents of multi-unit residential dwellings [April 22, 2020] (shared alongside bulletin, available online soon)
- **New:** Ministry of Health's [Guidance for Community Emergency Evacuations](#) [April 20, 2020]
- **Amended:** Ministry of Health's [Guidance for Consumption and Treatment Services](#) [April 16, 2020]
- Please visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's [website](#) and WDGPH's [website](#) regularly for updated guidance documents.

Support for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

- On April 13, the new **Supported Isolation Centre (SIC)** opened to provide a safe space for people experiencing homelessness to self-isolate during the COVID-19 pandemic. The SIC only takes referrals from Guelph General Hospital or the COVID-19 Assessment Clinic. Key partners for the SIC include: County of Wellington, the Drop-In Centre, WDGPH, EMS, Wyndham House, Stonehenge, GCHC, ARCH, Women in Crisis, the Guelph COVID Assessment Clinic, the Poverty Task-Force and CMHA.
- In Dufferin County, the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative is ensuring those living and working in congregate settings are adequately supported during the pandemic. Individuals experiencing homelessness are currently being supported within existing shelter spaces or have been moved to other accommodations.

Volunteer Assistance in WDG

Are you a non-profit or charity that could benefit from volunteer assistance during the COVID-19 crisis? We recognize there are essential services that require additional help.

- **For City of Guelph or Wellington County**, visit [PINnetwork.ca](#) to:
 - [Discover](#) how easy it is to connect to volunteers.
 - Not a member of PIN? Contact info@PINnetwork.ca; we can help.
 - Post opportunities detailing your volunteer needs related to COVID-19.
 - Interested volunteers can create a profile to receive a match and apply directly through the database. PIN shares your COVID-19 needs through social media and weekly e-listing.
- **For Dufferin County**, visit [Volunteerdufferin.ca](#) to:
 - [Discover](#) how easy it is to connect to volunteers.
 - [Create a profile](#) for your organization.
 - Then, post opportunities detailing your volunteer needs related to COVID-19. Be sure to 1) Check the box indicating the opportunity is related to COVID-19 so it shows in the filter, AND; 2) Check the COVID-19 area of interest so it matches with volunteers who have selected that in their Notification Preferences
 - Interested volunteers will then receive emails featuring your COVID-19 posts.

- Organizations can also visit www.sparkontario.ca to post volunteer opportunities.

Announcements and Changes to Services

- On April 24, the [Government of Ontario announced](#) a partnership with the federal government to provide **urgent relief for small businesses and landlords** affected by COVID-19 outbreak. The province is committing \$241 million through the new Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (OCECRA). The total amount of provincial-federal relief that would be provided is more than \$900 million, helping to ensure small businesses are ready to reopen their doors when the emergency measures are lifted. For more information about OCECRA visit the [news release](#).
- On April 23, the [Government of Ontario announced](#) a new [COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People](#) to better protect vulnerable populations. The plan focuses on three specific areas:
 - Enhanced screening and reduced exposure to prevent spread
 - Infection control: Managing outbreaks and limiting spread
 - Sustaining staff and managing staff shortages
- On April 23, [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced](#) more than \$1 billion in support of a **national medical research strategy** to fight COVID-19 that includes vaccine development, the production of treatments, and tracking of the virus. This new funding builds on the \$275 million investment for coronavirus research and medical countermeasures announced in March. Separately, the Government of Canada is providing over \$675,000 through the Stem Cell Network to support two new research projects and one clinical trial. For more information about the strategy, visit the [news release](#).
- On April 23, the [Government of Ontario announced](#) all emergency orders that have been put in place to-date under s.7.0.2 (4) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* have been **extended until May 6, 2020**. For a full list of the emergency orders that have been extended, visit the [news release](#). In addition, a new measure was introduced to allow mental health and addictions agencies to redeploy staff within different locations or between programs, and employ extra part-time staff, temporary staff or contractors in order to ensure people continue receiving the high-quality care they expect and deserve.
- On April 23, the [Government of Canada announced](#) a series of measures and an investment of approximately \$9 billion as part of its [COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan](#) to **help Canadian students and recent graduates**. Measures include supporting students through expanded student and youth programming, enhancing student financial assistance for Fall 2020, introducing the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) and Canada Student Service Grant and removing restrictions to allow international students to work more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session.
- On April 22, [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced](#) effective immediately, the government will remove the restriction that allows **international students** to work a maximum of 20 hours per week while classes are in session, provided they are working in an essential service or function, such as health care, critical infrastructure, or the supply of food or other critical goods.

- On April 22, the [Government of Ontario announced](#) a formal request is being made to the federal government for extra resources that could include personnel and other supports from Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and Canadian Armed Forces to support **long-term care** residents and staff. Since launching the [COVID-19 Action Plan for Protecting Long-Term Care Homes](#), the government has introduced more aggressive testing, screening, and surveillance, deployed specialized teams from hospitals, public health and the home care sector, recruited additional frontline staff, and increased personal protective equipment. For more information about targeted measures that have been taken since launching the *Action Plan*, visit the [news release](#).
- On April 21, the [Government of Canada launched](#) the [Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy \(CEWS\) calculator](#) to enable eligible employers to determine the amount they can expect to claim when applying for the wage subsidy. The **CEWS calculator** can equip employers with important information they can use now to make more informed decisions about retaining and re-hiring workers.
- On April 21, the [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced](#) \$350 million through the Emergency Community Support Fund to **support charities and non-profit organizations** that deliver essential services to those in need. Some of this funding will go to smaller, independent organizations while the rest will flow to national groups such as the United Way and Canadian Red Cross to support a variety of activities listed in [the news release](#).
- On April 21, the [Government of Ontario announced](#) additional relief **to protect vulnerable citizens, such as seniors and persons with disabilities** by:
 - Investing \$11 million to help deliver meals, medicines and other essentials to those in need. The province is working with the [Ontario Community Support Association \(OCSA\)](#) to launch a new Ontario Community Support Program to expand existing Meals on Wheels services to include the delivery of medications and other essentials to low-income seniors, people with disabilities and those with chronic medical conditions.
 - Doubling Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS) starting this week. Individuals will receive up to \$166 per month and couples will receive up to \$332 per month. These doubled payments will continue for six months and provide an additional \$75 million to 194,000 vulnerable seniors who may need more help to cover essential expenses during the COVID-19 outbreak.
 - Investing \$40 million in the Residential Relief Fund. The funding will assist developmental services, child welfare, victim shelters, and organizations delivering social services to vulnerable First Nations individuals and families with COVID-related costs, such as the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) and enhanced staffing.
 - Providing \$148 million to municipal partners that administer social services with funding to support the province's most vulnerable as part of the province's \$200 million in social services relief funding in response to COVID-19.

Latest Research

Transmission

Meselson M reviews the findings of several studies on droplet generation during speech, concluding: *“Aerosols from infected persons may therefore pose an inhalation threat even at considerable distances and in enclosed spaces, particularly if there is poor ventilation. The possible contribution of infective aerosols to the current pandemic suggests the advisability of wearing a suitable mask whenever it is thought that infected persons may be nearby and of providing adequate ventilation of enclosed spaces where such persons are known to be or may recently have been.”*

Nishiura H et al. analyzed data on clusters of COVID-19 cases, finding that the odds that a primary case transmitted COVID-19 in a closed environment was 18.7 times greater compared to an open-air environment (95% confidence interval [CI]: 6.0, 57.9).

Interventions

Meta-analyses carried out by Liang L et al. suggests that mask use provides a significant protective effect (OR = 0.35 and 95% CI = 0.24-0.51). The study found that use of masks by healthcare workers (HCWs) and non-healthcare workers (Non-HCWs) can reduce the risk of respiratory virus infection by 80% (OR = 0.20, 95% CI = 0.11-0.37) and 47% (OR = 0.53, 95% CI = 0.36-0.79), respectively. *“Conclusions: This study adds additional evidence of the enhanced protective value of masks, we stress that the use masks serve as an adjunctive method regarding the COVID-19 outbreak.”*

Disease Progression

Meta-analysis of published papers by Patanavanich and Glantz showed a significant association between smoking and progression of COVID-19 (OR 2.25, 95% CI 1.49-3.39, p=0.001). *“Limitations in the 12 papers suggest that the actual risk of smoking may be higher. Conclusions: Smoking is a risk factor for progression of COVID-19, with smokers having higher odds of COVID-19 progression than never smokers.”* And Travaglio M et al. have found that the levels of some markers of poor air quality, nitrogen oxides and ozone, are associated with COVID-19 lethality in different regions of the UK.

Additional Resources

- New: PHAC’s parenting during COVID-19 [information sheet](#)
- New: PHAC’s help reduce the spread of COVID-19 [information sheet](#) for Indigenous communities
- Updated: PHAC’s [information sheet](#) for travellers returning to Canada without symptoms
- Updated: PHAC’s [information sheet](#) for travellers returning to Canada with symptoms

Contact Information for Additional Support

Updated: WDGPH COVID-19 Call Centre

- **For health-related questions**, including symptoms, close contacts, travel or if you are a health care provider:
 - Call 519-822-2715 ext. 7006
 - Available Monday – Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. and weekends from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- **For non-health related questions**, including business or workplace concerns, social distancing questions or non-emergency reporting questions:
 - Call 519-822-2715 ext. 4020
 - Available Monday – Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Reliable information sources:

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health website: www.wdgppublichealth.ca

Ontario Ministry of Health webpage: www.ontario.ca/coronavirus

Public Health Agency of Canada webpage: www.canada.ca/coronavirus